

Captain Nelson Merrell House
Round Rock Vic., Williamson County
Texas

HABS No. TEX-3132

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Captain Nelson Merrell House
Round Rock, Williamson County, Texas

ADDRESS: Located on north side of Highway U.S. 79, 1.6 miles west of intersection with Interstate 35.

OWNER: Mr. and Mrs. Kelly McAdams, 1425 Preston St., Austin, Texas

OCCUPANT: Vacant

ARCHITECT AND BUILDER: Mr. A. Smith, builder

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Merrell house is significant historically because of its association with Captain Merrell, a prominent Austin area land owner and early Texas Ranger.

It is architecturally important as a representative of the plain but handsomely proportioned and well constructed Greek Revival homes of the central Texas rural area.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This is the second Merrell house to be built on the property. An earlier frame house, Merrill's first home, was located some distance south.

The house was begun on June 20, 1870 and completed May 1, 1871. A. Smith was the builder.

The house is substantially unaltered except for the rear kitchen wing. The rear gallery adjoining this wing was enclosed to form a new dining room. A frame room was added at the north end for a kitchen and pantry. The original pantry closet and china cabinet separating the old kitchen from the original dining room were removed. In recent years these elements have been rebuilt to approximate the original plan.

A bathroom was added in the 1930's on the rear porch at the juncture of the rear wing and main house.

The interiors have been variously altered. The room to the east of the central hall was papered and fiberboard tiles applied to the ceiling. The original floors in this room and the hall and rear wing have been replaced.

The wooden mantels are of such poor design and workmanship as to be later replacements. The fireboxes were relined in this century.

Structural examination indicates that the cupola was a later addition.

Nelson Merrell was born in Connecticut in 1810 but spent his early life in Ohio. In 1837 he immigrated to Texas and settled on Brushy Creek. He raised a Ranger Company in 1839 to control Indian depredations in the area. Also in 1839, Merrell participated in the internal Mexican quarrel between the Liberals and Centralists. By 1846, he was living on Walnut Creek in Travis County. He was appointed postmaster and established a post office there and the small community was named Merrelltown in his honor.

He married for the second time in 1846 and moved back to Brushy Creek. On his property there he built the Merrell house. He died in 1879.

SOURCES

- (1) Personal papers, accounts and records of Captain Nelson Merrell, Mrs. A. J. Crumley, Copperas Cove, Texas.
- (2) Mrs. Emil Anderson, "Nelson Merrell-Commissions and Biographical Data, 1810-1879", Austin, 1932. Archives, Library of The University of Texas, Austin, Texas.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Architectural Description: Two story rectangular block with end chimneys; subordinate one story wing at east rear, end chimney. Gabled roofs. Double gallery extends across front facade; one story porch at rear. Distinguishing feature is rectangular cupola projecting from ridge line of main block.

Condition Of Fabric: Good

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: Main block is 55'-4" long including the end chimney projections and is 41'-3" wide including front gallery (10'-11") and rear porch (9'-11 3/4").

Rear wing is 31'-9 1/2" long and 31'-0" wide including enclosed porch (9'-11 3/4").

Foundations: Continious native limestone. Stone piers under front gallery columns.

Wall Construction: Coursed ashlar native limestone

Structural System: Mass masonry; sills, joists, plater and rafters of cedar.

Porches: Front gallery covered by extension of house roof with slope broken at plate line. Wooden columns, rectangular section with moulded capitals at fascia line. Five bays (9'-8" wide except end bays, 9'-5"). Balustrade between columns, turned balusters. Wooden steps on axis with front entrance; turned balusters and heavy turned newels. Floors 1 x 4 T & G planks.

Rear porch has shed roof supported by rectangular section wood columns.

Chimneys: Three stone chimneys; one in each gable end of main block, and one in gable end of rear wing.

Doorways and Doors: Nine panel door; plain unmoulded wood pilasters and transom bar. Seven light transom and three light sidelights with panel below. No exterior woodtrim.

Windows: 6 x 6 light double hung wood sash; two panel adjustable louvered wood shutters opening out.

Roof: Approximate slope of $8\frac{1}{2}$ in 12. Cedar shingles. Cornices appear to be modern construction.

INTERIOR

Floor Plan: Central hall flanked by two main rooms. Rear wing of two rooms plus later enclosed porch and two small frame rooms. Central hall and two rooms on upper floor.

Stairway: Open stair to second floor; enclosed to attic; open to cupola.

Floor: 1 x 4 $5\frac{1}{8}$ " T & G yellow pine.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: All original interior walls are stone masonry, plastered and painted. Ceilings are 1 x 4 $5\frac{1}{8}$ " T & G yellow pine, painted. Dado with chair rail in the four main rooms.

Doors: Four panel wood doors with vertical center rail; door jambs are wood.

Trim: 1 x 5" yellow pine, bead on outside edge.

Hardware: Rim locks with brown porcelain knobs.

Lighting: Originally kerosene lamps; now wired for electricity.

Heating: Fireplaces in major rooms and kitchen. Fireplace mantels—wood; construction and design poor, probably replacements.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Orientation and General Setting: House faces south and parallels Highway U. S. 79. Enclosed yard, 176'-10" wide by 177'-6" deep. House situated 64'-4" back of front fence line.

Enclosure: Picket fence surrounding yard; some parts missing.

Outbuildings:

- 1) Ruins of the original smokehouse, ashlar limestone (13'-8" x 17'-5") behind rear wing.
- 2) Octagonal wooden well house located in back yard; a later addition.
- 3) Wooden wash house in far Northwest corner of back yard.
- 4) Wooden barn to the west of house, outside fenced yard. Probably c 1900.

Prepared by,

John C. Garner, Jr.

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October, 1965

APPROVED:

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DATE:

December 10, 1965